NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6311 DECEMBER 11, 1978
WILLIAM MARSH/OSLO

NOBEL AWARDS

(VOICED VERSION FED 9:03 A.M., 12/10-AVAILABLE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE HAS BEEN CONFERRED IN OSLO, NORWAY ON EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT AND ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN. WE HAVE A REPORT FROM VOA CORRESPONDENT BILL MARSH WHO WAS IN OSLO FOR THE EVENT.

VOICE:

THE CEREMONY HERE IN OSLO WAS BOTH SOLEMN AND COLORFUL. IT WAS BOTH TRADITIONAL AND UNIQUE. IT COMBINED THE ELEMENTS OF HISTORY AND UTMOST TOPICALITY. AND IN THE SPEECHES OF PRESENTATION AND ACCEPTANCE THERE WERE EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE THAT PEACE WAS ON ITS WAY, AND AT THE SAME TIME REGRETS THAT IT HAD NOT YET ARRIVED. THE SCENARIO WAS COMPLETE, YET INCOMPLETE. INCOMPLETE INASMUCH AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPALS, EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT, WAS NOT PRESENT, HAVING SENT A REPRESENTATIVE, ASSISTANT PRESIDENT SAYED AHMED MAREI, TO RECEIVE THE AWARD FOR HIM. THIS WAS OSLO ON THE TENTH OF DECEMBER.

THE AWARDS WERE PRESENTED IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY CITADEL, CASTLE AKERSHUS ON THE OLSO FJORD. NEVER BEFORE HAD THE PEACE PRIZE BEEN AWARDED HERE BECAUSE SECURITY, RARELY A MAJOR PROBLEM WHEN PEACE PRIZES ARE BESTOWED, HAS NOT BEEN A CONCERN. TODAY IT WAS A CONCERN. FEW JOURNALISTS HERE HAD OVERLOOKED THE FACT THAT PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS HAD ALSO BEEN SCHEDULED FOR THE DAY. THE MAIN RALLY WAS CALLED BY THE NORWEGIAN PALESTINE FRONT WITH THE SUPPORT OF VARIOUS NORWEGIAN POLITICAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS. THERE, ARGUMENTS WERE PRESENTED THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAD PROMOTED FURTHER CONFLICT, NOT PEACE, IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

BUT DESPITE THESE APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS, DESPITE THESE APPARENT DEPARTURES FROM TRADITIONAL PEACE PRIZE CEREMONIES, THE EMPHASIS WAS, IN FACT, ON PEACE. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, IN HIS ACCEPTANCE REMARKS, SAID THAT THE PATH TO PEACE HAD BEEN PAVED. HE REPEATED HIS PLEDGE AT CAMP DAVID THAT THERE SHALL BE NO MORE WAR, NO MORE BLOODSHED. ADDING THAT, "WE SHALL NEGOTIATE AND REACH AGREEMENT." PRESIDENT SADAT'S MESSAGE TO THE GATHERING READ BY MISTER MAREI WAS SIMILAR. "I WOULD LIKE TO PLEDGE AGAIN," HE SAID, "THAT EGYPT IS DETERMINED TO PURSUE THE ROAD TO PEACE." HE SAID THAT HE WOULD LEAVE NO AVENUE UNEXPLORED TO REACH THIS GOAL AND TO RECONCILE THE SONS OF ISHMAEL AND THE SONS OF ISAAC.

AND THE CEREMONY WAS MARKED BY EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE. MISSUS AASE LIONAES CHAIRWOMAN OF THE NORWEGIAN NOBEL COMMITTEE SAID THAT THE PEACE PRIZE HAS NEVER EXPRESSED A GREATER OR MORE AUDACIOUS HOPE. THE CONSTRUCTIVE FORCES OF PEACE SHE SAID HAVE HEWN OUT A PATH FOR THEMSELVES. THUS, AS ONE COMMENTATOR HERE PUT IT TODAY, THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT IS BOTH A THING OF THE PAST AND A THING OF THE FUTURE.

GH/RCS